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Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAM-01 OMB-01 /069 W
---------- 024800
R 281345Z OCT 76
FM AMEMBASSY LILONGWE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 424
INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMCONSUL DURBAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L LILONGWE 1192

DURBAN FOR AMBASSADOR STEVENSON

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, MI
SUBJECT: POLITICAL DEMISE OF ALBERT MUWALO NQUMAYO

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT HAS EXPELLED ALBERT MUWALO NQUMAYO FROM NUMBER TWO PARTY POSITION. THIS ACTION ALSO OUSTS MUWALO FROM GOM (MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO) AND AS CUSTOMARY IN MALAWI WILL RELEGATE HIM TO RANK OF NON-PERSON. MUWALO FOR PAST FEW YEARS HAS BEEN SECOND MOST POWERFUL MAN IN MALAWI UNDER LIFE PRESIDENT BANDA. WE BELIEVE OUSTER STEMS FROM PRESIDENT'S RECENT INVESTIGATIONS OF MUWALO AND DISMISSED EX-SPECIAL BRANCH CHIEF GWEDE WITH WHOM MUWALO WORKED CLOSELY IN HEAVY-HANDED AND OFTEN ERRATIC REPRESSIVE ACTIONS EFFECTED IN NAME OF PROTECTING INTERNAL SECURITY OF BANDA REGIME. INVESTIGATIONS SEEMINGLY CONVINCED PRESIDENT THAT MUWALO AND GWEDE HAD USED HIS NAME IN REPEATED ABUSES OF POWER OF WHICH HE HAD BEEN UNINFORMED AND THAT THIS WAS COSTING HIM POPULARITY AT GRASS-ROOTS LEVEL.
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OUSTER OF MUWALO IS NOT EXPECTED TO DRAMATICALLY ALTER REGIME'S

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HARSH METHODS ALTHOUGH IT MAY CURB MORE EXCESSIVE AND ERRATIC METHODS OF HARASSMENT, DETENTION, AND DEPORTATION. WHILE MINISTER OF LABOR DELEZA WILL ASSUME MUWALO'S PARTY FUNCTIONS ON ACTING BASIS, HE IS NOT EXPECTED TO CARRY MUWALO'S WEIGHT OR HAVE HIS FREEDOM OF ACTION. END SUMMARY.

1. ALBERT MUWALO NQUMAYO, SECRETARY GENERAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY OF MALAWI CONGRESS PARTY (MCP) AND MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO, WAS EXPELLED BY PRESIDENT BANDA FROM MCP EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 27. GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED MEDIA (RADIO AND LOCAL PAPER) FEATURED COMMUNIQUE STATING "MUWALO HAS BEEN EXPELLED FROM MCP FOR GRAVE BREACH OF DISCIPLINE" AND "CEASES TO HOLD ANY OFFICE WHICH HE HELD BY VIRTUE OF HIS MEMBERSHIP IN THE MALAWI CONGRESS PARTY" (I.E. HIS PARTY POSITIONS AS WELL AS MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO). COMMUNIQUE FURTHER STATED "PROPERTY WHICH HE ACQUIRED AS A RESULT OF HIS POSITION IN THE MCP OR THROUGH THE INFLUENCE OF HIS POSITION IN THE MCP IS FORFEITED". THIS LATTER WOULD AMOUNT TO LOSSES OF AT LEAST THREE TOBACCO FARMS OF ABOUT 100 ACRES EACH. COMMUNIQUE DID NOT MENTION THAT EXPULSION WAS AT RECOMMENDATION OF MCP DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE AS IS NORMAL PROCEDURE, ALTHOUGH EMBASSY HAD EARLIER REPORTS THAT MUWALO WAS EXPECTED TO APPEAR BEFORE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE.

2. COMMUNIQUE FURTHER STATED THAT WADSON DELEZA WILL BE ACTING SECRETARY GENERAL AND ACTING ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY OF THE MCP EFFECTIVE FROM OCTOBER 27 UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

3. MUWALO HAD HELD THE NUMBER TWO PARTY JOB (LIFE PRESIDENT BANDA IS ALSO LIFE PRESIDENT OF PARTY) SINCE 1973. PRIOR TO THAT HE HAD HELD POSITION OF ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY OF PARTY STARTING IN 1963. MUWALO HELD MINISTERIAL RANK SINCE 1964, STARTING WITH MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BEING ELEVATED TO MINISTER OF STATE IN 1966. IN A RECENT CABINET RESHUFFLE IN JUNE 1976 HIS TITLE WAS CHANGED FROM MINISTER OF STATE TO MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO ALTHOUGH HE STILL RETAINED THE NUMBER TWO POSITION IN THE GOM AFTER THE LIFE PRESIDENT.

4. OUSTER OF MUWALO COMES ON HEELS OF REMOVAL AND DETENTION OF SPECIAL BRANCH CHIEF FOCUS GWEDE (LILONGWE 0958) WHO IS BLOOD RELATIVE OF MUWALO AND WITH WHOM MUWALO WORKED CLOSELY ON INTERNAL SECURITY MATTERS. SOME BELIEVE CLOSE SCRUTINY OF GWEDE'S ACTIVITIES, CONFIDENTIAL

PARTICULARLY RECENT FLAGRANT CASE OF INTERFERENCE IN REGULAR POLICE AFFAIR IN ORDER TO PROTECT ONE OF HIS FAMILY, SPARKED INVESTIGATION WHICH EVENTUALLY LED TO MUWALO AND HIS DOWNFALL. WE HAVE SUSPECTED FOR SOME TIME THAT MUWALO HAD BECOME SUSPECT AND IT WASIN WAKE OF PRESIDENT'S SHAKEUP OF PARTY APPARATUS THIS PAST SPRING THAT MUWALO WAS REDUCED FROM MINISTER OF STATE TO MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO. AT SEPTEMBER 25 CLOSING SESSION OF PARTY CONVENTION BANDA STRONGLY DENOUNCED USE OF HIS NAME BY MALAWIAN OFFICIALS IN "ABUSES OF POWER"

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AND CALLED UPON MUWALO TO CONFESS PUBLICLY THAT HE WAS NO CLOSER TO BANDA THAN ANY OTHER MINISTER (HIS GOVERNMENT AND PARTY POSITIONS WOULD OBVIOUSLY BELIE SUCH A STATEMENT).

5. FOR SOME TIME MUWALO HAD BEEN IN A POSITION TO CONTROL ACCESS TO BANDA AND WE HAVE STRONGLY SUSPECTED HE MANIPULATED WHAT INFORMATION FILTERED TO PRESIDENT IN ORDER TO JUSTIFY, ON GROUNDS OF INTERNAL SECURITY, ACTIONS WHICH HE AND GWEDE UNDERTOOK TO CONSOLIDATE THEIR POWER BY INTIMIDATING MALAWIANS AND HARASSING EXPATRIATES. NUMEROUS UNWARRANTED DETENTIONS, PARTICULARLY OF INTELLECTUALS AND NORTHERNERS
,
ARROGANT DEPORTATIONS OF EXPATRIATES AND THE EXPULSION OF THE GOAN COMMUNITY ARE BUT SOME EXAMPLES. MUWALO'S RECORD REVEALS REPEATED INSTANCES, DATING BACK OVER A DECADE, OF A STRONG BIAS AGAINST FOREIGNERS, A HYPERSENSITIVE CONCERN WITH SECURITY AND THE PROMOTION OF EXTRALEGAL MEANS TO ENSURE THE LATTER. AS A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE (GWEDE WAS ALSO A MEMBER) HE HAD LEGITIMATE PLATFORM FROM WHICH TO INFLUENCE THE PRESIDENT'S THINKING RE SECURITY
.

6. EMBASSY VIEWS DEMISE OF BOTH MUWALO AND GWEDE AS POSITIVE ACTION ON PART OF PRESIDENT TO CURB EXCESSES OF WHICH HE HAS RECENTLY BECOME AWARE AND UNDOUBTEDLY FEELS HAVE HURT HIS POPULARITY. RECENT GRASS ROOTS TOUR OF THE NORTHERN AND CENTRAL REGIONS MAY HAVE CONVINCED HIM THAT NOW WAS THE TIME TO STRIKE DOWN MUWALO. HOWEVER, THE EMBASSY DOES NOT ENVISAGE A DRAMATIC CHANGE IN THE REGIME; ONLY THAT WE MAY EXPECT THE WORST EXCESSES OR MORE ERRATIC ACTIONS TO CEASE. WE DO NOT FORESEE THE AGING PRESIDENT LOOSENING HIS TIGHT REIGN OF POWER OR PERMITTING ANY CRITICISM OF HIMSELF OR HIS ACTIONS.

7. THE FACT THAT DELEZA, MINISTER OF LABOR (WE UNDERSTAND HE NO LONGER HOLDS THE OAU PORTFOLIO ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN NO OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT ON THIS SUBJECT), MOVES UP FROM MCP DEPUTY SECGEN AND CONFIDENTIAL

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DEPUTY ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY TO ACTING SECGEN AND ADMINISTRATIVE GIVES BANDA A LOYAL TOOL TO ACT ON HIS BEHALF. DELEZA IS NOT EXPECTED TO CARRY MUCH WEIGHT OR HAVE ANY FREEDOM OF ACTION. WHILE IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT DELEZA HAS MUWALO'S ADMINISTRATIVE TALENTS THERE IS A STRONG SIMILARITY BETWEEN THE TWO - MOST PEOPLE WHO HAVE DEALT WITH DELEZA HAVE FOUND HIM AS DIFFICULT AND UNSYMPATHETIC AS MUWALO.

8. IT IS DIFFICULT TO SAY IF MUWALO'S DEMISE SIGNIFIES A RELATIVE ADVANCEMENT FOR SUCH TRADITIONAL MUWALO OPPONENTS AS JOHN TEMBO (GOVERNOR OF THE RESERVE BANK) AND EX-PARTY SECGEN ALEKE BANDA WHO HAS MADE A STRONG COMEBACK BUT WHO IS STILL OUTSIDE THE GOVERNMENT AND PARTY HIERARCHY. AS PRESIDENT BANDA WANTS NO REPEAT NO POTENTIAL SUCCESSOR ON SCENE, IT IS MOST PROBABLE MUWALO'S LOSS WILL NOT BE ANOTHER'S GAIN.
HOFFMAN

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